

M A T I L D A:

A

1509/775

T R A G E D Y.

AS IT IS PERFORMED AT THE

T H E A T R E - R O Y A L

I N

D R U R Y - L A N E.

By the AUTHOR of the EARL of WARWICK.

T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N.

L O N D O N :

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[PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIX-PENCE.]

M A T I D A :

T R A D E Y.



PRINTED BY THE

THEATRE ROYAL

W R U N Y L A N E

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE

THESE SECOND EDITION

L O A D O N

[PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.]

DEDICATION.

TO THE PUBLIC.

SIR,

PERMIT me to return you my unfeigned thanks for your kind reception of this *Tragedy* on the stage, and to request the continuance of your favour to it in the closet. It would be the highest ingratitude in me to forget the only patron I ever had the good fortune to meet with, by whose powerful assistance I have been enabled to defeat the combined forces of envy, malice and detraction. I must at the same time fairly confess, my victory over the enemy was owing, I believe, as many other victories have been, more to the art and prowess of my *Officers* than to any extraordinary merit of my own. To the first in command, Miss YOUNGE, I have infinite obligations, which I shall always gratefully acknowledge, tho' I may never have it in my power to repay them; nor can the skill and conduct of my generals, REDDISH, SMITH and PALMER, be sufficiently admired. To your patronage and protection I most heartily and sincerely recommend them: If I have been the happy instrument of giving them a favourable opportunity of rising in *your* esteem, it will give me the greatest satisfaction. *You* can best distinguish their merit, and *you* alone are able to reward it.

*I am, Sir, your much obliged,
And devoted humble Servant,*

The Author.

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

MORCAR, } *Earl of Mercia,* { Mr. REDDISH.

EDWIN, } *Earl of Northumberland,* { Mr. SMITH.

SIWARD, } *Morcar's friend,* { Mr. PALMER.

OFFICERS, &c.



W O M E N.

MATILDA, } *A prisoner in the camp of Morcar,* { Miss YOUNGE.

BERTHA, } *Her friend,* { Miss PLATT.

SCENE, MORCAR'S Camp, and the Environs
near NOTTINGHAM.

P R O L O G U E.

Written by a F R I E N D.

Spoken by Mr. S M I T H.

*A Tragic Tale, from Norman William's Age,
Simple, and unadorn'd, attempts the Stage.
Our silly Bard, more simple than his Tale,
Thinks on your polish'd Manners to prevail;
What in those barb'rous Days were counted Crimes,
Are Slips of course in these enlighten'd Times:
Let not your Ancestors too rude appear,
Though firm in Friendship, and in Love sincere.
Love then like Glory did each Heart inflame,
Beauty was Virtue, and to win it, Fame,
Now Lovers lose their Mistresses with Grace,
As at New-Market they would lose a Race,
Where, if in Hopes they seem a little cross'd,
'Tis for the Money of the Match that's lost.
When Tilts and Tournaments call'd forth the Brave,
The Fame of spotless Innocence to save,
Each gallant Knight preferr'd his Love to Life,
For then the greatest Blessing was a Wife:
To prove their Chastity the dauntless Fair
Would walk through Flames, nor singe a single Hair;
Nay, some so chaste, so cold to all Desire,
Not only scap'd it, they put out the Fire!
But now no Heroes die for Love's sweet Passion,
And fiery Trials are quite out of Fashion.
Ye Sons of Frailty—you whom Rage devours,
For you this Night the Muse exerts her Pow'rs;*

With

P R O L O G U E.

With crimson Hands, pale Cheeks, and blood-shot Eyes,
She bids the Furies in their Terrors rise !
In Valour's Breast their Scorpion Stings they dart,
First fire the Brain, and then corrupt the Heart.
But what avails all Virtue ! Passion's gust,
Like Whirlwinds, drive it from the Heart like Dust ;
When Reason dawns, well may Repentance mourn
Love, Friendship, Duty, by the Roots up-torn.
To sooth this fatal Vice, the Flatterer tells
In stormy Minds how warmest Friendship dwells ;
The Tree whose sheltering Arms spread kindly round,
If Light'ning-struck, lies blasted on the Ground ;
In vain will Merits past Indulgence claim,
One Moment's Rashness blasts whole Years of Fame.



EPILOGUE.

By the AUTHOR of the TRAGEDY.

Spoken by Miss YOUNGE.

*HA! ha! poor Creature! how you trembling stand!
Come to the Bar, Sir, and hold up your Hand;
You won't—by Council then you'd have it done,
And I must plead your Cause—well, get you gone.*

[Coming forward to the Audience.

*Now for the great Tribunal of Old Drury;
Are you all sworn there—Gem'men of the Jury?
Good Men, and true, I hope—stay, let me see,
Amongst you all be challenges—but three.
Physicians, Lawyers, Parsons be admits,
Beaux, Ladies, Courtiers, Macaronies, Cits,
And only scratches—Critics, News-writers, and Wits.*

*The Critic first we banish from our Session,
Death is his Trade, and Damning—his Profession;
Disqualify'd—because, to say no further,
Butchers are never heard in case of Murther.*

*Next we disclaim th' Artificers of News,
Who live by Fibs, and flourish by Abuse;
They must condemn, or lose their daily Bread;
If they don't cut, and slash—they're never read;
Like fabled Giants here they roam for Food,
And Fe! Fa! Fum! snuff up an Author's Blood;
In the next Ledger hang him up to roast,
Or tear him Piece-meal in—the Morning Post.*

*To Wits we last except, and 'bove all other,
The Hero of our Tale—a Rival Brother!*

As

EPILOGUE.

*As Rogues, just 'scap'd the Gallows, join the Sbrievs,
Turn Hangmen, and tuck up their Fellow Thieves ;
So Bards condemn'd, exert the Critic's Skill,
And execute their Brethren of the Quill !
If like their own, indeed, the Brat should die,
They'll gladly join to write—its Elegy ;
But if the Child is strong, and like to live,
That is a Crime they never can forgive.*

*From such let English Juries still be free,
Our Author here appeals to your Decree,
The Public is—a Court of Equity. }
If he has shock'd your Taste, your Sense, or Reason,
Or against Nature guilty been of Treason,
Off with his Head ;—but if with honest Art
His well-meant Scenes have touch'd the feeling Heart ;
If they have rais'd your Pity, wak'd your Fears,
Or sweetly have “ beguil'd you of your Tears,”
Let venial Errors your Indulgence claim,
Your Voice his Triumph, your Applause his Fame.*

*Speak by your Foreman—what says Goodman Pit ?
Will you condemn the Prisoner, or acquit ?
Your Verdict, Sirs, Not Guilty—if you please—
You smile—Acquitted—hope you'll pay his Fees.*



MATILDA:

A TRAGEDY.*

A C T I.

SCENE, MATILDA'S Tent, with a view of
the distant country.

MATILDA. BERTHA.

MATILDA.

I Thank thee, gentle Bertha, for thy goodness;
If aught cou'd sooth the anguish of my soul,
Or raise it from the horrors of despair
To hope and joy, 'twou'd be thy gen'rous friendship;
But I am sunk so deep in misery,
That comfort cannot reach me.

BERTHA.

Talk not thus,
My sweet Matilda; innocence, like thine,
Must be the care of all-directing heav'n.
Already hath the interposing hand
Of providence redeem'd thee from the rage
Of savage war, and shelter'd thee within
This calm asylum. Mercia's potent Earl,
The noble Morcar, will protect thy virtues;

B

And

* The reader will meet with some lines which, to shorten the
scenes, were omitted in the representation.

And, if I err not, wishes but to share
His conquests with thee.

M A T I L D A.

O my friend, oft times
The flow'ry path that tempts our wand'ring steps
But leads to mis'ry; what thou fondly deem'st
My soul's best comfort, is its bitt'rest woe.
Earl Morcar loves me. To the gen'rous mind
The heaviest debt is that of gratitude,
When 'tis not in our power to repay it.

B E R T H A.

Oft' have I heard thee say, to him thou ow'st
Thy honour and thy life.

M A T I L D A.

I told thee truth.
Beneath my father's hospitable roof,
I spent my earlier happier days in peace
And safety: When the Norman conqueror came,
Discord, thou know'st, soon lit her fatal torch,
And spread destruction o'er this wretched land.
The loyal Ranulph flew to William's aid,
And left me to a faithful peasant's care,
Who liv'd, sequester'd, in the fertile plains
Of rich Northumbria: There awhile I dwelt
In sweet retirement, when the savage Malcolm
Rush'd on our borders.

B E R T H A.

I remember well
The melancholy hour. Confusion rag'd
On ev'ry side, and disolation spread
Its terrors round us. How didst thou escape?

M A T I L D A.

A crew of desp'rate ruffians seiz'd upon me,
A helpless prey: For, O! he was not there,
Who best cou'd have defended his Matilda.

Then



M A T I L D A.

Then had I fall'n a wretched sacrifice
To brutal rage, and lawless violence,
Had not the gen'rous Morcar interpos'd
To save me: Tho' he join'd the guilty cause
Of foul rebellion, yet his soul abhor'd
Such violation. At his awful voice
The surly ruffians left me, and retir'd.
He bore me, half expiring in his arms,
Back to his tent; with ev'ry kind attention
There strove to sooth my griefs, and promis'd, soon
As fit occasion offer'd, to restore me
To my afflicted father.

B E R T H A.

Something sure
Was due to gen'rous Morcar for his aid,
So timely given.

M A T I L D A.

No doubt: But mark what follow'd.
In my deliverer too soon I found
An ardent lover fighting at my feet.

B E R T H A.

And what is there the proudest of our sex
Cou'd wish for more? To be the envy'd bride
Of noble Morcar, first of England's peers,
In fame and fortune.

M A T I L D A.

Never trust, my Bertha,
To outward shew. 'Tis not the smiles of fortune,
The pomp of wealth, or splendor of a court,
Can make us happy. In the mind alone,
Rests solid joy, and true felicity,
Which I can never taste: For, O, my friend
A secret sorrow weighs upon my heart.

B 2 B E R T H A.

BERTHA.

Then pour it in the bosom of thy friend ;
Let me partake it with thee.

MATILDA.

Gen'rous maid !

Know then, for nought will I conceal from thee,
I honour Mercia's Earl, revere his virtues,
And wish I could repay him with myself ;
But, blushing, I acknowledge it, the heart
His vows solicit, is not mine to give.

BERTHA.

Has then some happier youth——

MATILDA.

Another time

I'll tell thee all the story of our loves.

But, O, my Bertha ! did'st thou know to whom
My virgin faith is plighted, thou would'st say
I am indeed unhappy.

BERTHA.

Cou'd Matilda

Bestow the treasure of her heart on one
Unworthy of her choice ?

MATILDA.

Unworthy ! No.

I glory in my passion for the best,
The loveliest of his sex. O ! he was all
That bounteous nature, prodigal of charms,
Did on her choicest fav'rite e'er bestow.
His graceful form and sweet deportment spoke
The fairer beauties of his kindred soul,
Where ev'ry grace and ev'ry virtue shone.
But thou wilt tremble, Bertha, when I tell thee,
He is Earl Morcar's—brother.

BERTHA.

BERTHA.

Ha! his brother!

The noble Edwin! Often have I heard
My father——

MATILDA.

Did Lord Edrick know him then?

BERTHA.

He knew his virtues, and his fame in arms,
And often wou'd lament the dire effects
Of civil discord, that cou'd thus dissolve
The ties of nature, and of brethren make
The bitt'rest foes. If right I learn, Lord Edwin
Is William's firmest friend, and still supports
His royal master.

MATILDA.

Yes, my Bertha, there
I still find comfort: Edwin ne'er was stain'd
As Morcar is, with foul disloyalty,
But stands betwixt his sov'reign and the rage
Of rebel multitudes, to guard his throne.
If nobly fighting in his country's cause,
My hero falls, I shall not weep alone;
The king he lov'd and honour'd, will lament him,
And grateful England mix her tears with mine.

BERTHA.

And doth Earl Morcar know of Edwin's love?

MATILDA.

O, no! I wou'd not for a thousand worlds
He shou'd suspect it, lest his fiery soul
Shou'd catch th' alarm, and kindle to a flame
That might destroy us all.

BERTHA.

I know his warmth
And vehemence of temper, unrestrain'd

By.

By laws, and spurning at the royal pow'r
Which he contemns, he rules despotic here.

MATILDA.

Alas! how man from man, and brother off
From brother differs! Edwin's tender passion
Is soft and gentle as the balmy breath
Of vernal zephyrs; whilst the savage north,
That curls the angry ocean into storms,
Is a faint image of Earl Morcar's love!
'Tis rage, 'tis fury all. When last we met
He knit his angry brow, and frown'd severe
Upon me; then, with wild distracted look,
Bade me beware of trifling with his passion,
He wou'd not brook it—trembling I retir'd,
And bath'd my couch in tears.

BERTHA.

Unhappy maid!
But time, that softens every human woe,
Will bring some blest event, and lighten thine.

MATILDA.

Alas! thou know'st not what it is to love.
Haply thy tender heart hath never felt
The tortures of that soul-bewitching passion.
Its joys are sweet and poignant, but its pangs
Are exquisite, as I have known too well:
For, O! my Bertha, since the fatal hour
When Edwin left me, never hath sweet peace,
That us'd to dwell with all its comforts here,
E'er deign'd to visit this afflicted breast.

BERTHA.

Too plain, alas! I read thy sorrows; grief
Sits in sad triumph on thy faded cheek,
And half obscures the lustre of thy beauties.

MATILDA.

M A T I L D A

7

M A T I L D A.

Talk not of beauty, 'tis our sex's bane,
And leads but to destruction. I abhor
The fatal gift. O! would it had pleas'd heav'n
To brand my homely feature with the mark
Of foul deformity, or let me pass
Unknown, and undistinguish'd from the herd
Of vulgar forms, save by the partial eye
Of my lov'd Edwin; then had I been blest
With charms unenvy'd, and a guiltless love.

B E R T H A.

Where is thy Edwin now?

M A T I L D A.

Alas! I know not,
'Tis now three years since last these eyes beheld
Their dearest object. In that humble vale,
Whence, as I told thee, Malcolm's fury drove me,
There first we met. O! how I cherish still
The fond remembrance! There we first exchange'd
Our mutual vows, the day of happiness
Was fixt; it came, and in a few short hours
He had been made indissolubly mine,
When fortune, envious of our happiness
And William's danger, call'd him to the field.

B E R T H A.

And since that parting have ye never met?

M A T I L D A.

O never, Bertha, never but in thought.
Imagination, kind anticipator
Of love's pleasures, brings us oft' together,
Oft' as I sit within my lonely tent,
And cast my wishful eyes o'er yonder plain,
In ev'ry passing traveller I strive

To trace his image, hear his lovely voice:
In ev'ry sound, and fain wou'd flatter me
Edwin still lives, still loves his lost Matilda.

BERTHA.

Who knows but fate, propitious to thy love,
May guide him hither.

MATILDA.

Gracious heav'n forbid!

Consider, Bertha, if the chance of war
Shou'd this way lead him, he must come in arms
Against his brother: Oh! 'tis horrible
To think on. Shou'd they meet, and Edwin fall,
What shall support me? And if vict'ry smiles
Upon my love, how dear will be the purchase
By Morcar's blood! Then must I lose my friend,
My guardian, my protector—ev'ry way
Matilda must be wretched.

BERTHA.

Is there ought

In Bertha's pow'r?

MATILDA.

Wilt thou dispatch, my friend,
Some trusty messenger with these?—Away.

(gives her letters.)

I'll meet thee in my tent—farewel. *[Exit Bertha.]*

MATILDA. *(alone.)*

Mean time

One hope remains, the gen'rous Siward—he
Might save me still. His sympathetic heart
Can feel for the afflicted.—I have heard,
(Such is the magic pow'r of sacred friendship)
When the impetuous Morcar scatters fear
And terror round him, he, and he alone

Can

Can stem the rapid torrent of his passion,
And bend him, tho' reluctant, to his will;
And see, in happy hour, he comes this way.
Now fortune, be propitious! if there be,
As I have heard, an eloquence in grief,
And those can most persuade, who are most wretched,
I shall not pass unpitied.

Enter SIWARD.

SIWARD.

Ha! in tears;

Matilda! What new grief, what cruel foe
To innocence and beauty, thus cou'd vex
Thy gentle spirit?

MATILDA.

Canst thou ask the cause;
When thou behold'st me still in shameful bonds,
A wretched captive, friendless and forlorn,
Without one ray of hope to sooth my sorrows.

SIWARD.

Can she, whose beauteous form, and fair demeanor,
Charm ev'ry eye, and conquer ev'ry heart,
Can she be wretched? can she want a friend,
Whom Siward honours, and whom Morcar loves?
O! if thou knew'st with what unceasing ardor,
What unexampled tenderness and truth,
He doats upon thee, sure thou might'st be wrought
At least to pity.

MATILDA.

Urge no more, my Lord,
Th' ungrateful subject; but too well I know
How much thy friend deserves, how much, alas,
I owe him!—If it be Earl Morcar's wish

C

To

To make me happy, why am I detain'd
 A pris'ner here! Spight of his solemn promise
 He would restore me to my royal master,
 Or send me back to the desiring arms
 Of the afflicted Ranulph, who in tears
 Of bitt'rest anguish, mourns his long-lost daughter?
 Surely, my Lord, it ill becomes a soldier
 To forfeit thus his honour and his word.

SIWARD.

I own it; yet the cause pleads strongly for him.
 If by thy own too pow'rful charms misled,
 He deviates from the paths of rigid honour,
 Matilda might forgive. Thou know'st he lives
 But in thy smiles; his love-enchanted soul
 Hangs on those beauties he would wish to keep
 For ever in his sight.

MATILDA.

Indulgent heav'n,
 Keep me for ever from it! O, my Lord!
 If e'er thy heart with gen'rous pity glow'd
 For the distress'd; if e'er thy honest zeal
 Cou'd boast an influence o'er the man you love;
 O! now exert thy pow'r, assist, direct,
 And save thy friend from ruin and Matilda.
 There are, my Lord, who most offend, where most
 They wish to please. Such often is the fate
 Of thy unhappy friend, when he pours forth
 His ardent soul in vows of tend'rest passion;
 'Tis with such rude and boist'rous violence
 As suits but ill the hero and the lover.

SIWARD.

I know his weakness, know his follies all,
 And feel 'em but too well: He loves with transport,

And

MATILDA.

And hates with fury. Warm'd with fierce desire,
Or strong resentment his impetuous soul
Is hurried on, 'till reason quits her seat,
And passion takes the loosely-flowing rein;
Then all is rage, confusion, and despair
And yet when cool reflection hath remov'd
The veil of error, he will weep his faults
With such a sweet contrition, as would melt
The hardest heart to pity and forgiveness.
O! he has virtues that may well atone
For all his venial rashness, that deserve
A sov'reign's love, and claim a nation's praise;
Virtues that merit happiness and thee.
Why wilt thou thus despise my noble friend?
His birth and fortune, with the rank he bears
Amongst the first of England's peers, will raise thee
As far above thy sex, in wealth and pow'r,
As now thou art in beauty.

MATILDA.

O, my Lord!

'Tis not the pride, the luxury of life,
The splendid robe and glitt'ring gem, that knits
The lasting bonds of mutual happiness:
Where manners differ, where affections jarr,
And will not kindly mix together, where
The sweet harmonious concord of the mind
Is wanting, all is misery and woe.

SIWARD.

By heav'n, thou plead'st thy own and virtue's cause,
With such bewitching eloquence, the more
Thy heart, alarm'd by diffidence, still urges
Against this union with my friend, the more
I wish to see him blest with worth like thine.

C 2

MATILDA.

MATILDA.

My Lord, it must not be; for grant him all
The fair perfections you already see,
And I cou'd wish to find, there is a bar
That must for ever dis-unite us—Born
Of Norman race, and from my earliest years
Attach'd to William's cause; I love my king
And wish my country's peace: That king, my Lord,
Whom Morcar wishes to dethrone; that peace
Which he destroys: Had he an angel's form,
With all the virtues that adorn his sex,
With all the riches fortune can bestow,
I wou'd not wed a traitor.

SIWARD.

Call not his errors by so harsh a name;
He has been deeply wrong'd, and souls like his,
Must feel the wounds of honour, and resent them.
Alas! with thee I weep my country's fate,
Nay wish, perhaps, as well to William's cause,
And England's peace, as can the loyal daughter
Of gallant Ranulph, and wou'd, therefore, joy
To see Matilda lend a gracious ear
To Morcar's suit. Thy reconciling charms
Might sooth his troubled soul, might heal the wounds
Of bleeding England, and unite us all
In one bright chain of harmony and love.
The gallant Edwin too—

MATILDA.

Ha! what of him?

Know'ft thou that noble youth?

SIWARD.

So many years
Have past since last we met, by diff'rent views,
And our unhappy feuds, so long divided.

I shou'd

I shou'd not recollect him ; but report
Speaks loudly of his virtues. He, no doubt,
If yet he lives—

M A T I L D A.

Yet lives !—Why, what, my Lord?

S I W A R D.

You seem much mov'd.

M A T I L D A.

Forgive me, but whenever

This sad idea rises to my mind,
Of brother against brother arm'd, my soul
Recoils with horror.

S I W A R D.

'Tis a dreadful thought:

Wou'd I cou'd heal the cruel breach ! but then
Thou might'st do much, the task is left to thee.

M A T I L D A.

For me ? Alas ! it is not in my pow'r.

S I W A R D.

In thine, and thine alone. O think, Matilda !
How great thy glory, and how great thy praise,
To be the blessed instrument of peace ;
The band of union 'twixt contending brothers.
Thou see'st them now like two descending floods,
Whose rapid torrents meeting, half o'erwhelm
The neighb'ring plains : Thy gentle voice might still
The angry waves, and bid the waters flow
In one united stream, to bless the land.

M A T I L D A.

That flatt'ring thought beams comfort on my soul,
Amidst my sorrows ; bear me witness, heav'n !
Cou'd poor Matilda be the happy means
Of reconcilment : Cou'd these eyes behold

The

The noble youths embracing, and embrac'd
 In the firm cords of amity and love;
 O! it wou'd make me ample recompence
 For all my griefs, nor wou'd I more complain,
 But rest me in the silent grave, well pleas'd
 To think, at last, I had not liv'd in vain.

SIWARD.

Cherish that virtuous thought, illustrious maid,
 And let me hope my friend may still be happy.

MATILDA.

I wish it from my soul: But see, my Lord,
 Earl Morcar comes this way, with hasty steps,
 Across the lawn. I must retire: Farewel!
 You'll not forget my humble suit.

SIWARD.

O! no,

I will do all that loveliest innocence
 And worth, like thine, deserve. Farewel: Mean time
 Remember, Siward's ev'ry wish, the bliss
 Of Morcar, Edwin's life, the public peace,
 And England's welfare, all depend—on thee.

[Exit Matilda.

SIWARD. (alone.)

There's no alternative but this; my friend
 Must quit Matilda, or desert the cause
 We've rashly promis'd to support—Perhaps
 The last were best—both shall be try'd—he comes.

Enter MORCAR.

MORCAR.

O, Siward! was not that
 The fair Matilda, whom you parted from?

SIWARD.

S I W A R D.

It was.

M O R C A R.

What says she? the dear, cruel maid!
Is she still deaf? inexorable still?

S I W A R D.

You must not think of her.

M O R C A R.

What say'st thou, Siward?
Not think of her!

S I W A R D.

No. Root her from thy heart,
And gaze no more. I blush to see my friend
So lost to honour: Is it for a man,
On whom the fate of England may depend,
To quit the dang'rous post, where duty calls,
And all the bus'ness of the war, to sigh
And whine in corners for a captive woman?
Resume the hero, Morcar, and subdue
This idle passion.

M O R C A R.

Talk not thus of love,
The great refiner of the human heart,
The source of all that's great, of all that's good;
Of joy, of pleasure—If it be a weakness,
It is a weakness which the best have felt:
I wou'd not wish to be a stranger to it.

S I W A R D.

Let me entreat thee, if thou valuest life,
Or fame, or honour, quit Matilda.

M O R C A R.

Yes:

I thank you for your council. 'Tis th' advice

Of

Of cold unfeeling wisdom, kindly meant
 To make me prudent, and to leave me wretched;
 But thus it is, that proud exulting health
 Is ever ready to prescribe a cure
 For pain and sickness which it never knew.

S I W A R D.

There too thou err'st; for I have known its joys
 And sorrows too. In early life I lost
 The partner of my soul. E'er since that hour
 I bade adieu to love, and taught my soul
 To offer her devotions at the shrine
 Of sacred friendship; there *my* vows are paid:
 Morcar best knows the idol of my worship.

M O R C A R.

I know and love thee for it: But O! my friend,
 I cannot force this tyrant from my breast;
 E'en now I feel her here, she sits enthron'd
 Within the foldings of my heart, and he
 Who tears her thence must draw the life-blood from me.
 My morning slumbers, and my midnight dreams,
 Are haunted by Matilda.

S I W A R D.

To be thus
 The slave of one that scorns thee, O! 'tis base,
 Mean, and unworthy of thee.

M O R C A R.

I will bear
 That scorn no longer: Thou hast rous'd me, Siward;
 I will enjoy the glorious prize; she's mine,
 By right of conquest mine. I will assert
 A victor's claim, and force her to be happy.

S I W A R D.

That must not be. It ill becomes the man
 Who takes up arms against a tyrant's pow'r,
 T'adopt

T'adopt a tyrant's maxims; force and love
Are terms that never can be reconcil'd,
You will not, must not do it.

MORCAR.

Must not! who

Shall dare oppose me?

SIWARD.

Honour, conscience, love,
The sense of shame, your virtue, and your friend,
Whilst I have life, or pow'r, I will not see
Matilda wrong'd.

MORCAR.

You are her champion then

It seems, her favour'd, happy friend, perhaps
Her fond admirer too. I'll-fated Morcar!
I see it but too well. I'm lost, abandon'd;
Alike betray'd by friendship and by love.
I thank you, Sir, you have perform'd your office,
And merit your reward.

SIWARD.

Unkind reproach!

Did I for this desert my Sov'reign's cause,
My peaceful home, and all its joys, to serve
Ungrateful Morcar? Why did I rebel?
The haughty William never injur'd me!
For thee alone I fought, for thee I conquer'd;
And, but for thee, long since I had employ'd
My gallant soldiers to a nobler purpose,
Than loit'ring thus in idle camp, to hear
A love-sick tale, and sooth a mad man's phrenzy.

MORCAR.

You could? Away, and leave me then: With-draw
Your boasted aid, and bid Northumbria's sons

D

Bend

Bend to the tyrant's yoke, whilst I alone
 Defend the cause of freedom, and my country.
 Here let us part. Remove your loiterers,
 And join th' usurper.

SIWARD.

Mark the difference now
 Betwixt blind passion and undaunted friendship:
 You are impatient of the keen reproof,
 Because you merit: I can bear it all,
 Because I've not deserv'd it.

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Good my Lords
 Forgive this rough intrusion, but the danger
 I trust, will plead my pardon. As I watch'd
 From yonder tow'r, a dusky cloud appear'd,
 As if from distant troops advancing, soon
 I saw their armour glitter in the sun;
 With rapid motion they approach'd; each moment
 We must expect them here.

SIWARD.

Why, let 'em come,
 Already I have order'd fit disposal
 Of all our little force. Away, good Osmond,
 Be silent and be ready. *[Exit Officer.]*

Now, my friend,
 Thou art as welcome to thy Siward's breast,
 As dear as ever.—When the man I love,
 Walks in the paths of error, I reprove him
 With honest freedom; but when danger comes
 Upon him, I forget his faults, and flee
 With all a lover's ardour to his rescue;
 His sorrows and his wants alone remember'd,
 And all his follies buried in oblivion.

MORCAR.

M A T I L D A 41

MORCAR.

Thou hast disarm'd me now. This pierces more
Than all the bitter poison of reproach,
Which thou hast pour'd upon me. O! 'twas treason
Against the sacred majesty of friendship,
To doubt thy honour, or suspect thy virtue.
Thou wilt forgive: But when the wounded mind
Is torn with passion, ev'ry touch is pain;
You should not probe so deeply.

SIWARD.

'Twas my duty.

But come, no more of that. The foe advances.
If we succeed, as my prophetic soul
Foretells we shall—I have some comfort for you—
If not, we'll borrow courage from despair,
And die like men. Thou stand'st upon the rock
Of danger, and the yawning precipice
Opens before us; I will snatch thee from it,
Or leap the gulph, and perish with my friend.

The End of the First Act.

A C T II.

SCENE, *a Fortrefs belonging to MORCAR.*EDWIN *alone (in chains.)*

EDWIN.

IT is the will of heav'n, and must be done.
 The hard-fought field is lost, and here I am
 A pris'ner in my brother's camp: alas!
 That fortune thus shou'd guide me to a foe
 Whom most I wish'd to shun! We little thought
 The troops by Morcar led, had this way bent
 Their ill-directed course: But providence
 Hath so ordain'd, perhaps, to heal the wounds
 Of civil discord. O! unhappy Edwin,
 For what art thou reserv'd? No matter what.
 Since fate depriv'd me of my dear Matilda,
 Whom I for three long years have sought in vain,
 Life hath been irksome to me: this, perchance,
 May end it—For, who knows if nature yet
 May live within the conq'ror's breast, to plead
 A brother's pardon? Yet he knows me not,
 But soon he must—Ha! who comes here? Earl Siward!—
 The second in command, to whom, o'erpower'd
 By circling foes, and fainting with my wounds,
 I yielded up my sword. If fame say true,
 He bears a mind too great to look with scorn
 On the oppress'd, or triumph o'er misfortune.

Enter

Enter SIWARD.

SIWARD.

Stranger, whoe'er thou art, be comforted ;
Thy fate hath thrown thee into noble hands,
Who know thy merit. May I ask thy name ?

EDWIN.

I am a poor abandon'd wretch, the sport
Of fortune ; one whose least affliction is
To be a captive, and from ev'ry eye
Wou'd wish to hide the story of my fate :
Too soon my name and sorrows will be known.

SIWARD.

Respect is ever due to misery :
I will not urge thee further ; all I hope,
That gen'rous pity could afford to sooth
Calamity like thine, by my command,
Hath been extended to thee. Here awhile
You must remain a pris'ner, but e'er long
I hope to greet thee by a fairer name,
And rank thee as our friend.

EDWIN.

Your gen'rous orders
Have been obey'd, and I acknowledge it
With grateful heart. May I not ask the fate
Of him who fought so nobly by my side,
That brave old man.

SIWARD.

The gallant Ranulph—

SIWARD.

My fellow captive.

EDWIN.

He is safe and free,

Edwin.

EDWIN.

Ha! free! Thank heav'n!

SIWARD.

The gen'rous Morcar, urg'd

By my entreaties, pardon'd and releas'd him,
 Tho' much our soldiers murmur'd, and demanded
 His life and your's; a sacrifice, they said,
 Due to the manes of their slaughter'd friends;
 But mercy has prevail'd.

EDWIN.

What e'er becomes

Of an unhappy wanderer, like me,
 For your kind treatment of the aged Ranulph,
 Accept my thanks; it was a precious boon;
 Morcar may find me not unworthy of it.
 To-day I am his captive, but to-morrow
 May see me his deliverer; For know
 My royal master, the victorious William,
 With eagle swiftness, soon will follow me
 With twenty times your force. As this shall prove
 Or true, or false, so deal with me; remember,
 I warn'd you of it.

SIWARD.

And remember thou

That I with joy receive the welcome news:
 Welcome to me, for I am William's friend.

EDWIN.

Thou can'st not then be mine, or England's foe:
 With such a heart as thine, so nobly form'd
 To feel for the afflicted, satisfy'd,
 For thou seem'st, of William's royal right,
 What cou'd engage thee in this foul revolt,
 This base rebellion?

SIWARD.

M A T I L D A.

23

SIWARD.

What but the great bond
Of kindred souls, inviolable friendship!
The only solid blifs on this side heav'n,
That doubles all the joys of human life,
And, by dividing, lessens ev'ry woe.

EDWIN.

Who knows but this day's sad event may prove
The happy means to heal a nation's wounds,
And sooth our jarring factions into peace?

SIWARD.

Had Morcar thought with me, long since that end
Had been obtain'd; but Morcar is—

EDWIN.

Inexorable.

So I have heard, and therefore little hope
To change his nature. O! could he be wrought
To sweet oblivion of his wrongs; to bury
His resentment: Mine shou'd be the task,
A task, heav'n knows, I wou'd with joy perform,
To reconcile offended majesty:
To soften all his errors, plead his pardon,
And give my sov'reign one brave soldier more.

SIWARD.

When next we meet I trust it shall be so:
Mean time, let me prepare him for the change;
Retire a while—e'er long we'll send for thee.
For ev'ry moment I expect him here:
Thy freedom and thy happiness shall be
My first concern, for thou hast well deserv'd it.

EDWIN.

Farewel. Be quick in your resolves; the time

Requires

Requires it, and be wise e'er 'tis too late.

[Exit Edwin.]

SIWARD. (*alone.*)

I hope we shall. This well-tim'd victory,
If rightly us'd, may smoothe our way to peace.
Now, Morcar, all thy happiness depends
Upon thyself alone. Now, friendship, raise
Thy pow'rful voice, and force him to be happy.
He will, he must—he comes—

Enter MORCAR.

SIWARD.

My conq'rор, welcome!

MORCAR.

Thrice welcome to my arms, my noble Siward;
At length we meet in joy, the day is ours;
Thanks to thy friendly aid.

SIWARD.

We must not boast;

'Twas hardly purchas'd, and has cost us dear:
Your follow'd 'em too close.

MORCAR.

I own 'twas rash;

My youthful ardour urg'd the keen pursuit
Too far; and but for thee I had been lost.
In war, thy arm protects me, and in peace,
Thy councils guide. O! how shall I return
Thy goodness? Thou wer't born to save thy friend.

SIWARD.

Away. I'll not be thank'd. I've done my duty,
And if thou think'st thyself indebted for it,
Repay me not with flatt'ry, but with love.
E'er since my soul with thine, congenial met

In

In social bands, and mark'd thee for her own;
Thy interest and thy happiness have been
My first ambition; and when thou art blest
With all thy soul can wish for, Siward then,
And then alone, will have his full reward.

M O R C A R.

O, unexampled faithfulness and truth!
But say, my Siward, is our loss so great?

S I W A R D.

The flow'r of half our troops. But 'tis not now
A time to weep, for I have glorious tidings,
That much import thy happiness.

M O R C A R.

Ha! what?

S I W A R D.

Know that amongst our captives I have ta'en
A noble prize, will make us full amends
For ev'ry loss—the gallant Ranulph.

M O R C A R.

Ha!

Matilda's father! then I'm satisfy'd.
The wily chief! by heav'n he shall repay me
For her unkindness: Give him to my rage,
To my resentment, to my injur'd love.
Where is he, Siward?

S I W A R D.

I have set him free.

M O R C A R.

Ha! free! Thy ill-tim'd mercy hath betray'd
Our cause. The tyrant wou'd have ransom'd him
With half his kingdom.

S I W A R D.

Still thy rapid passions

O'erpow'r thy reason. What if it shou'd serve

E.

A bet-

A better purpose ; smooth thy paths to blifs,
And gain Matilda for thee !

MORCAR.

O, my friend !

My Siward, do not flatter me : By heav'n,
Her kind consent wou'd give my ravish'd soul
More true and heart-felt happiness than cou'd
A thousand vict'ries o'er the proud usurper.

SIWARD.

Know then, I gave him liberty and life
On these conditions—That he shou'd with-draw
His pow'rs from William's aid, and never more
Assist his cause ; the time wou'd come, I told him,
That he shou'd know to whom he ow'd the boon,
And how he might repay it.

MORCAR.

That was kind,

Indeed, my Siward, that was like a friend.
O ! thou reviv'ft my drooping heart ; but tell me ;
Did my Matilda, let me call her mine ;
Did she acknowledge ; did she thank thee for it ?

SIWARD.

O ! I assum'd no merit ; but to thee,
And to thy gen'rous, unexampled love
Did I attribute all. She sigh'd, and wept,
Pour'd forth a thousand blessings on thy head——

MORCAR.

And do'st thou think, my Siward, that one ray
Of hope remains ?

SIWARD.

The clouds already vanish,
The prospect brightens round thee ; haste and seize
The lucky moment. When the gen'rous mind
Is sooth'd by obligation, soon it opens

To

M A T I L D A

26
27

To the mild dictates of humanity,
And softens into sympathy and love.

MORCAR.

O, Siward! could'st thou teach me but to win
That lovely maid——

SIWARD.

The task is half perform'd
Already, and my friend shall soon be blest'd.
One thing, and one alone, remains to fix
Her doubtful heart, if yet a doubt remains.

MORCAR.

O! name it, Siward; if 'tis in the pow'r
Of wealth to purchase, or of victory
In the fair field of glory to acquire,
It shall not long be wanting.

SIWARD.

It requires
No price, but such as Morcar well can pay;
No vict'ry, but the vict'ry o'er thyself,
And thy own passions—Give up thy resentment,
Make peace with William, and Matilda's thine.

MORCAR.

Matilda mine! and must I purchase her
At the dear price of honour? with the loss
Of all my soul holds dear, my country's welfare?
My word——

SIWARD.

Away! whilst prudence warranted
Our honest zeal, I was the first to aid
Thy just revenge; but valour ill-advis'd,
And ill-exerted in a hopeless cause,
Degen'rate into rashness. You mistake
The pride of honour, for the pride of virtue.

MORCAR.

And wou'd'st thou have me bend beneath the yoke
Of ignominious flav'ry, quit the cause
Of heav'n-born freedom, and betray my friends?

SIWARD.

I'd have thee just and happy—We have been
Successful, let us now be generous,
Whilst we have something to bestow ; nor wait
'Till fickle fortune from our brows shall tear
The blasted wreath, and leave us nought to give
Too long already have we sacrific'd
At proud ambition's altar, to revenge ;
Now let us offer at the shrine of peace,
And sacrifice——

MORCAR.

To love, and to Matilda ;

It shall be so—the struggle's past—away,
My Siward, haste, and tell her, I obey ;
Her laws, her king, her master shall be mine ;
I have no will but her's, and in her eyes
Will read my duty—Yet a moment stay,
What will my brave companions of the war,
My fellow soldiers say ? Will they approve
This unexpected change ?

SIWARD.

I know them firm

In their obedience, and resolv'd to act
As you command—But I will see 'em strait,
And urge such pow'rful reasons as may best
Secure them to our purpose. Fare thee well.

MORCAR.

Siward, thy kind anticipating care
Prevents my every wish—But say, my friend,

Where

Where is the gallant chief whom we subdu'd,
Who fought so hardly, and so nobly fell?

SIWARD.

In yonder tent, a wretched pris'ner still,
He counts the tedious hours ; a heavy gloom
Sits on his brow, as if some deep-felt sorrow
Oppress'd his noble mind—We must release him.

MORCAR.

Thou know'st, my Siward, thrice we had o'erpow'rd
His troops, and thrice his single valour turn'd
The fortune of the day : Since first I trod
The paths of glory, ne'er did I behold
Such deeds of valour wrought by mortal hand ;
I almost envy'd, tho' I conquer'd him.
He wore his beaver up, nor could I trace
His features, but he bears a noble form :
Know'st thou his quality or name?

SIWARD.

Not yet;

He seems industrious to conceal them both
From ev'ry eye.

MORCAR.

Some deity protects him,

As its peculiar care, for as I rais'd
My sword against him, whether the soft passion
That triumphs o'er me, had unmann'd my soul,
I know not ; but, bereft of all its pow'r,
My nerveless arm drop'd ineffectual down,
And let him 'scape me.

SIWARD.

'Tis most true, I saw

And wonder'd at it. When you left the field,
With desperate rage he rush'd intrepid on,

And

And seem'd to court his fate, till circling foes
Compell'd him to resign, and yield his sword.

M O R C A R.

Away. I burn with ardor to forgive,
To free, and to embrace him: Fly, my Siward;
Let him approach, he cou'd not wish to meet
In happier hour, the master of his fate,
For now, methinks, I cou'd be reconcil'd
To ev'ry foe. Away, my Siward, haste
And send him to me.

S I W A R D.

Treat him like a friend,
He may be useful. Such distinguish'd merit
Must have its influence; he commands, no doubt,
The royal ear, and may procure such terms
As William may with honour yield, and we
Without a blush accept. *[Exit Siward.]*

M O R C A R. *(alone.)*

Farewel. And now
How stands the great account? Can I acquit
Myself, or shall I be condemn'd before
The great tribunal, all-repaying justice?
But fair Matilda wipes out ev'ry stain;
'Tis she commands me to forgive, and she
Must be obey'd; I'm not the first apostate
From honour's cause the tyrant love has made.
My friend too urg'd the change——

Guards bring in E D W I N chained.

He's here—Strike off
Those ignominious chains—he has deserv'd
A better fate. *(Guards unchain him.)*

Stranger, whoe'er thou art, *(turning to Edwin.)*
Thy gallant bearing in th' unequal conflict,
For we had twice thy numbers, hath endear'd
A foldier to a foldier. Vulgar minds

To

To their own party, and the narrow limits
Of partial friendship, meanly may confine
Their admiration; but the brave will see,
And seeing, praise the virtues of a foe.

EDWIN. (*aside.*)

O, pow'rful nature, how thou work'st within me!

MORCAR.

Still silent! still conceal'd! perchance thou fear'st,
Knowing thy rank and name, I might recal
My promis'd pardon; but be confident,
For by that sacred honour, which I hold
Dearer than life, I promise here to free,
And to protect thee, did'st thou hide from me
My deadliest foe: Shou'd William's self appear
Before me, he who hath so deeply wrong'd me,
So long oppos'd: Nay, shou'd I hear the voice
Of that advent'rous, rash, misguided youth,
Whom yet I cannot hate—my cruel brother,
I cou'd forgive him.

EDWIN. (*discovering himself.*)

Then—behold him here,

MORCAR.

Edwin! Amazement! By what wond'rous means,
Mysterious providence, do'st thou unfold
Thy secret purposes? I little thought
When last we met, what heav'n-protected victim
Escap'd my sword.

EDWIN.

With horror I recal

The dreadful circumstance. Throughout the battle
I knew, and carefully avoided thee.

MORCAR.

O, Edwin! how, on this propitious day,
Have vict'ry, fame and friendship, fortune, love

And

And nature, all conspir'd to make me blest!
 We have been foes too long—Of that no more.
 My Edwin, welcome! Once more to thy arms
 Receive a brother.

EDWIN.

Yet a moment stay:
 By nature touch'd, the same accordant string
 That vibrates on thy heart now beats on mine;
 But honour, and the duty which I owe
 The best of kings, restrains the fond embrace
 I wish to share, and bids me ask, if yet
 In Morcar I behold my sov'reign's foe.
 If it be so, take back thy proffer'd freedom,
 Take back my forfeit life: I wou'd not wish
 To be indebted for it to—a traitor.

MORCAR.

Perhaps I may deserve a better name;
 Perhaps I may be chang'd.

EDWIN.

I hope thou art;
 For this I came, for this I yielded to thee,
 To tell thee William's strength is ev'ry hour
 Increasing: If thou mean'st to make thy peace,
 Now is the crisis—

MORCAR.

Edwin stop, nor urge
 Such mean unworthy motives as alone
 Cou'd thwart my purpose. Morcar cannot fear,
 But Morcar can be gen'rous: For know,
 Before I saw the here I had resolv'd
 To sheath my sword and be the conq'ror's friend;
 For O! there is a cause—

EDWIN.

Whate'er the cause,
 Th' effect is glorious. Now thou art again

My

My brother. Here let us once more unite

The long-dissever'd cord.

(They embrace.)

MORCAR.

And never more.

May blind resentment, faction, party, rage,

Envy, or jealous fear, dissolve the tie!

And now, my Edwin, blushing, I confess,

Not to thy tender care for Morcar's safety,

To friendship's council, or to reason's voice,

Owe we this wish'd for change. A female hand

Directs and wills it.

EDWIN.

Ha! a woman!

MORCAR.

Yes,

If such I ought to call that form divine,

Which triumphs here, who rules my ev'ry thought,

My ev'ry action guides. In yonder tent

A beauteous captive dwells, who hath enslav'd

Her conqueror: She demands the sacrifice;

She wou'd not give her hand to William's foe,

And therefore, only, Morcar is his friend.

EDWIN.

I cou'd have wish'd that this important change

Were to the hero, not the lover, due.

MORCAR.

I am above deceit, and own my weakness;

But thou shalt see her—Yes, my Edwin, thou

Shalt bear the welcome tidings to my love.

Thy presence will bear witness to the change;

Thy freedom, and the joyful news thou bring'st

Of our blest union will confirm it to her.

Wilt thou, my Edwin—

F

EDWIN.

E D W I N.

Do not ask me what
 I must refuse. I wou'd do much to serve
 A friend and brother; but a task of joy
 Ill suits a soul oppress'd with griefs like mine.
 O! I cou'd tell thee—but 'twou'd be unkind
 When thou art ent'ring on the paths of bliss,
 To stop thee with my melancholy tale.

M O R C A R.

What e'er thy griefs, I pity, and hereafter
 May find the means to lessen, or remove them;
 Mean time this tender office may divert
 Thy sorrows; nay, if thou deny'st me, Edwin,
 I shall not think our union is sincere.

E D W I N.

Then be it so.

M O R C A R.

I'll send a trusty slave
 That shall conduct thee to her. Soon I mean
 To follow thee—away—begone and prosper.
 But, O, my brother! if thou hast a heart
 That is not steel'd with stoic apathy
 Against the magic of all-conqu'ring love,
 Beware of beauty's pow'r; for she has charms
 Wou'd melt the frozen breast of hoary age,
 Or draw the lonely hermit from his cell
 To gaze upon her.

E D W I N.

Know, thy fears are vain;
 For long, long since, by honour's sacred ties,
 United to the loveliest of her sex,
 Edwin, like Morcar, is to one alone
 Devoted, *and my heart is fix'd as thine.*

M O R C A R.

MORCAR.

Then I am blest. Thy sympathetic soul,
With warmer feelings, shall express *my* passion,
Wak'd by the fond remembrance of thy *own*.

Go then, thy kind returning friendship prove,
Go, plead with all the eloquence of love ;
And as thou do'st thy brother's anguish tell,
Still on thy lips may soft persuasion dwell !
Urge my fond suit with energy divine,
Nor cease till thou hast made the lovely captive mine.

The End of the Second Act.

A C T III.

SCENE, MATILDA'S Tent, with a distant
view of the Camp.

MATILDA, BERTHA.

MATILDA.

O, Bertha! I have had such frightful dreams,
They harrow'd up my soul.

BERTHA.

It is the work

Of busy fancy in thy troubled mind;
Give it no heed.

MATILDA.

O! it was more, much more
Than fancy ever form'd; 'twas real all;
It haunts me still, and ev'ry circumstance
Is now before me; but I'll tell thee all.
Scarce had I clos'd my eyes, to seek that rest
Which long had been a stranger, when methought
Alone I wander'd thro' a mazy wood,
Beset with thorns and briars on ev'ry side;
The mournful image of my wretched state:
When, from a winding walk, the beauteous form
Of my lov'd Edwin, seem'd to glide across,
And ran with haste to meet me: But, behold!
A tygar rush'd between, and seiz'd upon him:
I shriek'd aloud.

BERTHA.

'Twas terrible.

MATILDA.

M A T I L D A.

But mark

What follow'd ; for a gleam of light broke in,
 And sav'd me from despair : When 'cross the glade
 A gen'rous lyon, as with pity mov'd
 At the unequal conflict, darted forth
 And sprung with vengeance on the spotted beast,
 Who turn'd with fury on his nat'ral foe,
 And loos'd my Edwin ; he escap'd, and fled :
 I wak'd in agonies.

B E R T H A.

Be comforted ;
 The dream presages good : Some gen'rous friend
 Shall save him from the perils of the war,
 And give him to thy longing arms again.

M A T I L D A.

O, never, never !

Enter an OFFICER.

O F F I C E R.

Noble lady, one
 From William's camp, by Morcar's orders sent,
 Wou'd crave a minute's conference, and says
 He bears some news that may be welcome.

M A T I L D A.

Ha !

From William's camp ! O, flatt'ring hope ! who knows
 But he may bring some tidings of my love !
 Tidings, perhaps, I may not wish to hear.
 Perhaps he comes to speak of Edwin's death ;
 Or Edwin's falshood—Be it as it may,
 I cannot be more wretched than I am.
 Conduct him hither.

[Exit Officer.]

O, my flatt'ring heart !

Look

Look yonder ! how imagination forms
 What most we wish for ; see, he comes—It is,
 It is my Edwin—Save me, Bertha ! O !

(as he enters she faints.)

Enter E D W I N.

E D W I N.

What do I see ? Matilda here ! she faints !
 Am I deserted then ? abandon'd, lost,
 Betray'd by her I love ? She breaths, she lives !
 But not for me—for Morcar ; for my brother.

M A T I L D A. *(to Bertha.)*

Where is he ? O ! it was delusion all ;
 The form deceiv'd me. Had it been my love,
 He wou'd have flown with rapture to me—See
 He stands far off, and will not look upon me.

E D W I N.

I dare not.

M A T I L D A.

Is it thus we meet again ?
 Is this the kind, the tender, faithful Edwin ?

E D W I N.

Art thou Matilda ? Speak ; for I am lost
 In wild astonishment. It cannot be.
 In Morcar's camp ! Is this the lovely captive
 That I shou'd meet ?

M A T I L D A.

All-seeing heav'n,
 Bear witness for me : If, from that sad hour
 When last we parted, this devoted heart
 Hath ever wander'd, ever cast one thought,
 Or form'd a wish for any bliss but thee,
 Despise me, Edwin ; slight me, cast me off
 To infamy and shame.

E D W I N.

E D W I N.

I must, I must

Believe thee; Yet, 'tis strange—when thou shalt know
From whom I came, and what my errand here.

Thou wilt not call me cruel or unkind,
When I shall tell thee I am come to claim
Another's right, O! heav'n, another's right
To my Matilda; to request thy hand
For Morcar.

M A T I L D A.

For thy brother!

E D W I N.

Yes, ev'n now

We parted.—Here he told me I should meet
A beauteous captive; little did I think
It was Matilda, whom he long had woo'd;
Whose gen'rous heart, he hop'd, wou'd now accept
A convert made to loyalty by love;
She only waited for that blest event,
With mutual ardour to return his passion.
Can it be thus? Alas! thy presence here
Confirms it but too well.

M A T I L D A.

Appearance oft,

By strange events and causeless jealousy,
Confounds the guilty with the innocent.
But sure my Edwin's noble mind disdains
To cherish low suspicion; 'tis a vice
Abhorrent to thy nature, and Matilda
Will never practice it on thee. True love
Knows not distrust, or diffidence, but rests
On its own faith secure, and hopes to meet
The truth it merits.

E D W I N.

E D W I N.

Can this be the voice
Of falshood?—Can those lips?—

M A T I L D A.

Mistaken man!

Coud'st thou e'er credit the delusive tale?
Cou'dst thou believe I had so soon forgot
My plighted faith? But since I am suspected,
Return, and bear this answer back to Morcar.
First say, I thank him for the choice he made
Of thee to be the herald of his love:
For what is there Matilda can refuse,
That Edwin cou'd request?

E D W I N.

O! that recalls

A thousand tender thoughts—

M A T I L D A.

Go tell him too,

What e'er I rashly promis'd but to gain
A few short moments, to preserve my king,
And save a father's life, I never meant
To feign a passion which I cou'd not feel;
For I was destin'd to another's arms;
To one, who now regardless of his vows
To poor Matilda, after three long years
Of cruel absence from her, comes at last
To doubt her honour, and suspect her love.

E D W I N.

O! never, never. Sooner will I doubt
The pow'rs of nature, and believe these eyes
Can misinterpret ev'ry object here,
Than think thee false. O! take me to thy arm
And bury all my doubts.—Can'st thou forgive
The jealous warmth of agonizing passion?

MATILDA.

MATILDA.

I can; I must. But say, to what blest chance
Am I indebted for this happy moment?

EDWIN.

The chance of war. I am a pris'ner here,
And but for thee—

MATILDA.

When I shall tell thee all
That I have suffer'd since we parted last
Thou wilt not blame, but pity poor Matilda.
Mean while be calm; it is not now a time
For idle doubts and visionary fears
When real dangers threat. I see already,
By thy imperfect tale, what misery
Must soon await us, when the fiery Earl
Shall know this strange event.

EDWIN.

And wherefore know it?
Why not conceal our passion, 'till some means
Of freedom offer?

MATILDA.

I abhor the thought.
No, Edwin, no. The crisis of our fate
Approaches. Never let us stain our loves
With crooked fraud and base dissimulation.
Hark! did'st thou hear a voice in yonder grove?
Siward in conf'rence with the haughty Earl;
Behold them—see—they part—and Morcar hastes,
With quick impatient step, to know his fate.
Now summon all thy pow'rs.

EDWIN.

I am prepar'd.
He comes: A few short minutes will determine

G

Whether

Whether Matilda plays the hypocrite,
Or is deferving of her Edwin's love.

Enter M O R C A R.

M O R C A R.

At length I hope Matilda's satisfy'd.
Edwin has told thee what a sacrifice
My heart hath made. Ambition, glory, pride,
And fierce resentment, bend beneath thy pow'r,
And yield the palm to all-subduing love.
Yes, thou hast conquer'd. I am William's friend;
The struggle's past. I have perform'd the task
Assign'd, and come to claim my just reward.

M A T I L D A.

By virtuous acts the self-approving mind
Is amply paid, nor seeks a recompence
From ought beside. You have redeem'd your honour,
Turn'd to the paths of duty, and discharg'd
The debt you owe your country, and your king:
England and William will be grateful for it.
What can you wish for more?

M O R C A R.

There is a prize,
More welcome far, beyond what e'er a king
Or kingdom can bestow—thy love——

M A T I L D A.

My lord!

M O R C A R.

If to have sav'd thee from the brutal rage
Of pitiless ruffians; if to have renounc'd
A victor's claim, and be myself the slave
Of her I conquer'd; if to have releas'd
My bitt'rest foe, because ally'd to thee;
If, after all my cruel wrongs, t' accept

The

The proud oppressor's hand, can merit ought,
I am not quite unworthy of the boon.

MATILDA.

The good and just, my Lord, demand our praise,
And gen'rous deeds will claim the tribute due,
The debt of humble gratitude; but love,
Love, that must mark the colour of our days
For good or ill, for happiness or woe,
'Tis not the gift of fortune, or of fame,
Nor earn'd by merit, nor acquir'd by virtue.
All the rich treasures, which, or wealth, or pow'r
Have to bestow, can never purchase that
Which the free heart alone itself must give.

MORCAR.

Give it with freedom then to him who most
Hath study'd to deserve—

MATILDA.

You talk, my Lord,
As if the right of conquest cou'd bestow
A right more precious, and a dearer claim;
But know, for now 'tis time to throw aside
The veil that long hath hid from Morcar's eyes
The secret of my soul; and say, at last,
I never can be thine.

MORCAR.

Ha! Never! O,
Recall that word!

MATILDA.

I must not: Edwin knows
There is a bar of adamant between,
That must for ever part us.

MORCAR.

Ha! for ever!
Distraction! can it be? Take heed, Matilda,

I am not to be mock'd thus. O, my brother!
 Did'st thou not hear her? But astonishment
 Has clos'd thy lips in silence—Never mine!
 And wherefore not be mine? *(turning to Matilda.*

M A T I L D A.

Because I am
 Another's—Well I know our hapless sex,
 So custom wills, and arbitrary man,
 Is taught in fearful silence to conceal
 The honest feelings of a tender heart:
 Else, wherefore shou'd Matilda blush to own
 A virtuous passion for the best of men?

M O R C A R.

A virtuous passion! grant me patience, heav'n!
 I am betray'd, abandon'd, lost. Another's!
 Some fawning slave, some Norman plunderer,
 Rich with the ravish'd spoils of English valour,
 Hath snar'd her easy heart, and tortur'd mine.
 But I will drag him from his dark abode;
 Where e'er he lurks, he shall not 'scape my veng'ance.
 Thou hear'st her, Edwin.

E D W I N.

Aye: Who wou'd not wish
 To hear the voice of nature, and of love,
 Thus nobly pleading by the lips of truth?

M O R C A R.

Amazement! Thou art link'd with the vile slave
 That hath usurp'd my right. All, all conspire
 To make me wretched.

E D W I N.

Why shou'd Morcar think
 That lovely maid wou'd act beneath herself,
 And make so mean a choice? Now, on my soul,
 I doubt not but the object of her love

Hath

Hath earn'd the glorious prize, and will be found
Deserving of it.

MORCAR.

Thou know'st him then?

EDWIN.

I do;

Know him as brave, as noble as thyself;—
One who wou'd scorn, howe'er the outward act
Might seem unworthy of him, to do ought
That shou'd disgrace his family and name,
A man he is of yet untainted honour,
Of birth and valour equal to thy own,
Though fortune frowns upon him.

MORCAR.

Now, by heav'n,

But that I know thy eyes were never blest
With my Matilda's charms, I shou'd suspect
Thou hadst betray'd the sacred trust repos'd
In thy false heart, by unsuspecting friendship,
And wer't thyself the traitor.

EDWIN.

Think so still.

Let fancy, ever busy to torment
The jealous mind, alarm thee with the thought
Of seeing him whom thou hast thus revil'd;
Stand forth and dare the proof; suppose him here
Before thee, ready to assert his claim,
His prior right to all the joys that love
And fair Matilda can bestow: Then look
On me, and know thy rival in—thy brother.

MORCAR.

Confusion! horror! misery! O heav'n!
Can'st thou behold such complicated guilt,
Such unexampled perfidy, and yet

With-

With-hold thy vengeance! Let thy lightnings blast
The base betrayer! O, Matilda! false,
Deceitful, cruel woman!

M A T I L D A.

'Tis the lot
Of unprotected innocence to meet
The cruel censure, which to guilt alone
Is due. I've not deceiv'd, I've not betray'd thee;
And wou'd'st thou listen to the artless tale
I cou'd unfold—

M O R C A R.

Away! I will not hear,
Nor see, nor think of thee. Deceitful villain!
Was this thy kind concern for Morear's safety?
Was it for this that subtle Edwin came
A willing captive? Boasted William's strength,
And lur'd me to a base, inglorious peace?
That, like a midnight ruffian, he might steal,
Unseen and unsuspected on my love,
And rob me of Matilda.

E D W I N.

I abhor
A thought so mean; the bare suspicion stains,
With such foul blot, my honour and my name,
I will not deign to answer thee. My birth
Alone might prove, to any sense but thine,
That I disdain it: 'Tis enough to say
I am Earl Morear's brother.

M O R C A R.

I disclaim
All ties of nature, or of friendship with thee,
And henceforth hold thee as my deadliest foe:
As such I will pursue thee, slave; for know

Tho

MATILDA

47

Thou art my pris'ner still—Who waits there? Seize
And guard this traitor—

(Guards enter and seize on Edwin.)

MATILDA. *(kneeling to Morcar.)*

O, my Lord! if e'er

Soft pity touch'd thy breast, if e'er thy heart
Felt the warm glow of sympathetic grief
For the unhappy, do not let the rage
Of thoughtless passion urge thee to a deed
Of horror, which, too late, thou wilt repent.
O, spare a guiltless brother, spare thyself
The bitter pangs of sad remorse, that soon
Shall harrow up thy soul, when radiant truth
Shall flash conviction on thee. O! forgive
And pity—

EDWIN.

Rise, Matilda: 'Tis beneath
The dignity of innocence to kneel
Before proud guilt, and supplicate a tyrant.

MATILDA, *(rising.)*

I feel the just reproach—Forgive me, Edwin;
Henceforth I never will disgrace thy love,
By mean submission. Morcar, if thou hop'st
For future peace, or pardon, set us free.

MORCAR.

I'll hear no more, convey her to her tent.

MATILDA.

Edwin, adieu! If honour, virtue, truth,
And mutual love, protect the innocent,
We yet shall meet in happiness—farewel!

(Exit Matilda guarded.)

MORCAR.

Let none have entrance there, but faithful Siward,
Wou'd he were here, that I might pour my sorrows

Into

Into his friendly bosom ! O, Siward !

Where art thou ?—Ha, he comes !

Enter SIWARD.

SIWARD.

My Lord, the troops
Flush'd with their late success, refuse all terms
Of peace with William, and cry out for war
And vengeance—

MORCAR.

They shall have it. Now, by heav'n,
Thou bring'st me glorious tidings—well, what more ?

SIWARD.

They have discover'd that the noble pris'ner,
Who had surrender'd, is thy brother Edwin ;
This hath alarm'd them : they suspect you both
Of vile collusion, to betray their cause,
And yield them to the tyrant. If, they say,
You mean them fair, let Edwin be confin'd,
And answer for the treason, with his life.

MORCAR.

And so he shall : They cou'd not ask a boon
Which Morcar wou'd more readily bestow ;
Already their request is granted—See
The traitor is secur'd. All-seeing heav'n !
Thou see'st how justice will o'ertake the wicked !

SIWARD.

What can this mean ? Since last I saw my friend,
How the fair day that shone so bright upon us,
Is suddenly o'ercast.

MORCAR.

Alas, my Siward !
When thou shalt know—but 'tis enough to say
Matilda's false, and Edwin is—a villain.

SIWARD.

SIWARD.

Amazement! can it be?

MORCAR.

It is too true;

And I am lost for ever. O, Matilda!

Deceitful woman!

SIWARD.

'Tis not now a time

For idle plaints: Consult your safety: Fly

This moment to the camp—your presence there,

And that alone, may quell the rising storm:

Leave Edwin to my care.

MORCAR.

I go, my Siward,

Safe in thy friendship; I entrust to thee

My just revenge. Yon moss-grown tow'r that hangs

O'er the deep flood—'tis under thy command—

Place double guard—he must not 'scape—his fate

Shall be determin'd soon. What e'er it prove,

It cannot be more wretched than my own. [*Exit Mor.*]

EDWIN, SIWARD.

EDWIN, (*pointing to the guards.*)

Where is my dungeon? My conductors here
Wait but your orders; give 'em their commission;

For you it seems, Sir, are to execute

The friendly office: Do it, and be happy.

SIWARD.

Guards, fet your pris'ner free—Thou little know'st

Of Siward's soul, to think it joys in ought

That gives another pain. I've learnt too well,

In sad affliction's hard, but wholesome school,

The lesson of humanity.

H

EDWIN.

E D W I N.

O gen'rous Siward, if thou hast a heart
To feel for others mis'ries, pity mine,
And poor Matilda's: She has not deserv'd
A fate like this.

S I W A R D.

Alas! it rives my soul
To see the tender bonds of amity
Thus torn asunder by the very means;
I fondly thought for ever wou'd unite them;
And the fair structure, which my hopes had rais'd,
Of love and friendship, in a moment shrunk
From its weak base, and bury'd all in ruin.
If thou can'st prove thy innocence, as yet
I hope thou wilt, for in that noble mien
I read a conscious pride, that wou'd not stoop
To ought that's base—Still may I hope to heal
These bleeding wounds, and sooth him to forgiveness.
Mean time be free. Give me thy sacred word,
The soldier's oath, thou wilt be found when e'er
I call upon thee; and yon tent alone
Shall be thy prison; free to range around,
Far as my guard extends.

E D W I N.

Accept my thanks,
The humble tribute of a grateful heart;
'Tis all I have to give. The time may come
When Edwin shall repay thee as he ought.

S I W A R D.

Is there ought more, which honour, and the duty
I owe my friend, permits me to bestow,
That thou wou'd'st ask?

E D W I N.

EDWIN.

O, grant me to behold
That injur'd maid, to take my last farewell;
Then act as fate and Morcar shall determine.
I give the pledge of safety thou requir'st,
And will be found—speak, wilt thou listen to me?

SIWARD.

Of that we'll talk hereafter—come—within
I'll hear thy story—Thou but know'st me yet
As Morcar's friend; hereafter thou may'st find
I am still more the friend—of truth and virtue.

The End of the Third Act.

A C T IV.

SCENE, *An Apartment belonging to SIWARD,
opening to a wood.*

EDWIN, MATILDA.

EDWIN.

THANKS to the noble Siward's gen'rous pity
For the distress'd ; once more we meet, Matilda,
But only meet, alas ! to mourn our fate,
To feel each others woes, and to be wretched.

MATILDA.

Eternal blessings wait on him who thus
Cou'd sweeten sorrow's bitter draught, and make
Captivity a blessing ! O, my Edwin !
A few short moments spent with those we love,
Is worth an age of common life.

EDWIN.

With thee

Indeed it is ; but we are on the verge
Of a dark precipice, and ev'ry step
Is dangerous. If Morcar shou'd return,
And find us here together, we are lost
For ever ; thou hast seen, and seen with horror,
The desp'rate rage of his tumultuous soul,
Let us avoid it, let us——

MATILDA.

What, my love?

Thou art my guide, protector, guardian, all

I have

I have to boast on earth. O! teach me where
To find some blest asylum for my woes,
And guide my footsteps to the paths of peace.

EDWIN.

Let me entreat thee then——

MATILDA.

O, speak! thou know'st
I have no will but thine.

EDWIN.

Then leave me, leave
This hated roof: I have a friend within,
Who shall conduct thee to the royal camp
In safety; bear this signet to the king,
He will protect thee, and what ever fate
Decrees for me, Matilda may be happy.

MATILDA.

O! never, never: Safety dwells with thee,
And thee alone. Without my faithful Edwin,
The peopled city and the crowded court,
Wou'd be a desert to me. No, my love,
We will not part: The same benignant pow'r
That led thee hither, that, beyond my hopes
Brought my lost Edwin to these arms, again,
Will still protect that virtue which it loves.

EDWIN.

Did'st thou not tell me, that this very morn
Thou had'st determin'd, as the only means
To shun my brother's love, on sudden flight?

MATILDA.

But then I shou'd have fled in search of thee.

EDWIN.

Thou winning softness! how shall I reward
Such unexampled tenderness and truth!

MATILDA.

M A T I L D A.

By flying with me. Come, my love, lead on,
 I'll follow thee to dangers and to death;
 Nor perils shall affright, nor labours tire,
 When thou art with me.

E D W I N.

No: it must not be.

M A T I L D A.

Why? What shou'd keep thee here?

E D W I N.

The ties of honour.

M A T I L D A.

And are they stronger than the bonds of love?

E D W I N.

To Siward's kind indulgence, well thou know'st,
 I owe this little interval of peace,
 This transient gleam of happiness with thee;
 And shou'd I break my sacred word, his life
 Might answer for it; wou'd'st thou have me thus
 Repay his kindness? No, my love; I may
 Be wretched, but I cannot be ungrateful.

M A T I L D A.

Must thou return then to that hateful prison
 When Morcar comes?

E D W I N.

I must. O! think when I

Am pent within a loathsome dungeon, who
 Shall shelter then thy unprotected virtue?
 No Edwin there to succour thee: Who knows
 What brutal lust and pow'r may dare to act,
 On a deserted, beauteous, friendless woman?
 Distracting thought! A monarch's vengeance then
 Wou'd come too late, wou'd make me poor amends
 For my Matilda's violated charms.

M A T I L D A.

M A T I L D A.

He cannot be so mean, so base of soul,
Or if he shou'd, I have a dagger here
To save me from dishonour.

E D W I N.

What! by death?

Dreadful alternative! O! hazard not
Thy precious life, but seize the lucky moment
Which fortune gives us, e'er it be too late.

M A T I L D A.

Urge me no more; already I have felt,
Too deeply felt, the pangs of absence from thee;
Another separation wou'd be worse
Than death, and all its terrors. No, my love;
We are embark'd on a tumultuous sea,
And must abide the fury of the storm.
The waves of angry fortune *may* o'erwhelm,
But *shall not* part us: We will stem the torrent,
Brave the proud ocean's rage, and gain the harbour
Of peace and happiness—or *sink* together.

E D W I N.

Thou hast foretold the tempest, and behold
It rushes on us.

Enter M O R C A R and H A R O L D.

M A T I L D A.

Ha! Earl Morcar here!

M O R C A R.

Harold, I thank thee; thy intelligence
Was but too true. *(turning to Edwin.)*

Traitor! who set thee free?
They wou'd have 'scap'd my vengeance—false Matilda!
'Tis thus I am rewarded for my love,

My

My ill-tim'd mercy to a thankless brother.
 Back to thy dungeon, slave. Guards, drag him hence,
 To prison, and to death. *(to the Soldiers.)*

E D W I N.

Or death, or life,
 Are equal to me, if I must be torn
 From my Matilda. But, whate'er thy purpose,
 Be speedy in thy vengeance, nor delay
 The cruel work; for know thy master comes,
 William approaches—to revenge my cause.

M O R C A R.

But not to save thee,

E D W I N.

Then farewell, Matilda,
 Perhaps for ever—If we meet no more
 Thou wilt remember—But I will not doubt
 Thy honour, or thy love. I know thy truth.
 Know thou wilt act as best becomes thy fate,
 Whate'er it be, and worthy of thyself.

M A T I L D A.

Of thee, my Edwin, rather say of *thee*.
 Yes; I will copy well thy bright example;
 I'll not disgrace thy love with woman's weakness,
 But part without a tear. I will but stay
 To tell thy tyrant brother how I hate,
 How I despise him, and then follow thee.

M O R C A R.

I'll hear no more—begone!—away with him. [*Exeunt*
 For thee, Matilda— *guards with Edwin.*]

M A T I L D A.

What for me remains
 I know too well; thy odious love, reproach
 Unmerited, and threats which I despise.

Thou

Thou think'st I have deceiv'd thee—think so still.
 Enjoy thy error. Thou believ'st us guilty ;
 'Twill make thee happy now—Perchance to find
 Us innocent, may be thy punishment hereafter.

MORCAR.

Aye, 'twas a proof of innocence to fly,
 Thou and thy paramour together.

MATILDA.

No;

I scorn a thought so mean. Cou'd I have left
 My Edwin, long e'er this I might have been
 Beyond the reach of tyranny ; beyond
 Thy hated pow'r ; and safe beneath the wing
 Of sacred majesty, in William's care.

MORCAR.

In William's care !

MATILDA.

Thy conqueror's—for know
 The hero comes—to scatter blessings round him,
 To heal his country's wounds, chastise rebellion,
 And punish false perfidious slaves like thee.

MORCAR.

By heav'ns ! she braves my wrath, insults my weakness,
 And triumphs o'er her slave.

MATILDA.

There was a time,
 When with an eye of pity, I beheld
 Thy hopeless love ; when I conceal'd my passion
 For the dear idol of my heart, because
 I fear'd 'twou'd make thee wretched ; but thy rage,
 Thy cruel treatment of a guiltless brother,
 Has cancell'd all.

I

MORCAR.

MORCAR.

Then, mark me: If thou hop'st
For Edwin's freedom, shake off this vile passion;
Yield thy proud heart to him who best deserves it,
And meet me at the altar—Two hours hence
I shall expect thee there—Beyond that time
He may not live to thank thee for thy bounty.

MATILDA.

Then let him perish—glut thy tyrant soul
With vengeance: bathe it in a brother's blood.
All ruffian, all barbarian, as thou art,
Thou can'st not murder his immortal fame;
Thou can'st not rob him of Matilda's love.
But know—when he, for whom alone this pulse
Wou'd wish to beat, this lazy blood to flow
Within my veins, when he shall be no more;
Another life shall satiate thy revenge;
Another victim shall attend thy triumph.

MORCAR.

Thou talk'st it nobly—'tis the common trick,
The affectation of thy sex to boast
A fancied firmness, which ye never knew;
But with affrighted nature thou wou'd'st shrink
When death approaches.

MATILDA.

Put me to the proof.
If thou wou'd'st punish Edwin, know he lives
Within this breast—strike home, and pierce him there.

MORCAR.

Imperious woman! thou defy'st my pow'r,
And let it crush thee. If thy country bleeds
In ev'ry vein; if perjur'd Edwin falls,
As soon he shall, a victim to my rage;
Thou

Thou art the murd'rer ; thou the paricide :
I stand absolv'd ; the guilt is all thy own.

MATILDA.

If it be guilt to suffer keen reproach,
Pain, persecution, terror, chains and death
For him I love, rather than stain my soul
With foul disloyalty, I am indeed
The guiltiest of my sex, and well deserve
The pangs I feel.

MORCAR.

Thou'lt driv'n me to the pit
Of black despair, and I will drag thee down
To share the dreadful ruin thou hast made.

MATILDA.

I know thy savage purpose ; but remember,
The hour approaches when thou shalt repent
This base, unmanly triumph. William comes :
Hear that and tremble, thou unnat'ral brother ;
Nor rocks, nor caves shall hide thee from his vengeance ;
Inglorious, and unpitied, shalt thou fall,
And after ages shall consign thy name
To endless scorn, and infamy immortal. [*Exit Matilda.*]

MORCAR.

Inexorable judge ! I stand condemn'd,
And shall await my doom ; but not alone
Or unreveng'd shall Morcar fall—henceforth
I bid adieu to love, and all his train
Of fond delusions—Vengeance ! I am thine,
And thine alone : Thou daughter of despair !
Destructive goddess ! come, possess my soul
With all thy terrors—Yes ; it shall be so.
A few short hours are all that niggard fate
Will deign to spare me ; I'll employ 'em well,
For I will croud into the narrow circle

A little age of misery and horror.
Ha! Siward here! what brought thee hither?

Enter S I W A R D.

S I W A R D.

Pity

For the distress'd, I knew thou wert unhappy,
And came where duty call'd, to pour the balm
Of friendship in, and heal thy wounded heart.

M O R C A R.

O, they have pierc'd too deep; ev'n thou, my friend,
Thou hast betray'd me: was it not unkind
To set my pris'ner free; to let him meet
Matilda, and conspire against my life?

S I W A R D.

Impossible! by heav'n the artful story
He told, so wrought upon my easy soul,
I thought him innocent.

M O R C A R.

Hast thou not heard—

S I W A R D.

From Harold only an imperfect tale,
So strange I cou'd not credit it.

M O R C A R.

Alas!

'Tis all too true: I am the veriest slave,
The meanest wretch that e'er was trampled on
By an imperious woman: O, my friend!
My Siward! I have nought on earth but thee:
Shou'd'st thou forsake me in this hour of terror!
But sure thou wilt not.

S I W A R D.

No: What e'er the will
Of wayward fortune may determine for us,
Behold me ready to partake thy fate.
If we must sue for peace, let Siward bear

The

The olive for thee : if once more we cast
 The desp'rate dye of battle, let me perish
 By Morcar's side. Come, let us on together ;
 Shake off this load of unavailing sorrow,
 And seek the field ; there, if we fall, we fall
 With honor : if we rise, we rise to—glory.

M O R C A R.

Talk not of glory to a wretch like me,
 Bereft of ev'ry hope. There was a time
 When that enliv'ning call wou'd have awak'd
 My active spirit, and this drooping heart
 Bounded with joy ; but my Matilda's lost :
 Revenge alone——

(Enter a messenger to Siward with Letters.)

S I W A R D.

From Walstcoff these ;

'Tis well—retire.

[Exit messenger.]

(Reads)——How's this ? then all is lost.

He writes me here, that William's fame in arms,
 Spite of his cruel and oppressive laws,
 Hath rais'd him friends in ev'ry part : already
 The northern rebels are dispers'd, and thousands
 Flock to the royal standard. To resist
 Were madness.

M O R C A R.

And to yield were cowardice
 More shameful——

S I W A R D.

What must we resolve on ?

M O R C A R.

Death :

The wretches only hope, the wish'd—for end
 Of ev'ry care, but I wou'd meet him cloath'd
 In all his terrors, with his reeking spear,

Dipt

Dipt in the blood of an ungrateful mistress ;
And a false happy rival : Then, my Siward,
Shalt thou behold me welcome the kind stroke,
And smile in agony.

SIWARD.

Unhappy youth !
The storm beats hard upon thee ; but our fate
Will soon be fixt, for William comes to-morrow.

MORCAR.

To-morrow ! ha ! then something must be done,
And quickly too. If William comes, he comes
To triumph over us : then, my Siward, who
Shall punish Edwin ? who—shall wed Matilda ?
I cannot bear it—If thou lov'st me, Siward ;
For now I mean to try thy virtue ; swear
By all the pow'rs that wait on injur'd honor,
What e'er my anxious soul requests of thee,
Thou'lt not refuse it.

SIWARD.

By the hallow'd flame
Of sacred friendship, that within this breast,
Since the first hour I seal'd thee for my own,
With unremitted ardor still hath glow'd,
I will not—Speak, my Morcar, here I swear
To aid thy purpose.

MORCAR.

'Tis enough ; and now
Come near and mark me : Thou command'st the tow'r
Where Edwin is confin'd.

SIWARD.

I do.

MORCAR.

Methinks

It were an easy task—you understand me—

Justice

Justice is slow, and—William comes to-morrow.

Thy friendly hand—

SIWARD.

My lord!—

MORCAR.

Thou trembl'st—Well another time, my Siward,
We'll talk on't—shall we not? Thou mean'st to do
As thou hast promis'd?

SIWARD.

Certainly.

MORCAR.

Then speak,

And do not trifle with me.

SIWARD.

Sure my lord,

You cannot mean to—

MORCAR.

Is he not a villain?

SIWARD.

I fear he may be so.

MORCAR.

A hypocrite.

SIWARD.

He hath, perhaps, deceiv'd you, and deserves—

MORCAR.

To perish.

SIWARD.

No; to suffer, not to die;

Or, if to perish, not by Morcar's hand,

Or Siward's—O! 'tis horrible to shed

A brother's blood—

MORCAR.

A rival's.

SIWARD.

S I W A R D.

Nature—

M O R C A R.

Love—

S I W A R D.

Humanity—

M O R C A R.

Matilda—

S I W A R D. (*aside.*)

Gracious heav'n!

That passion thus should root up ev'ry sense
Of good and evil in the heart of man,
And change him to—a Monster.

M O R C A R.

Hence! away,
And leave me—From this moment I will herd
With the wild savage in yon leafless desert,
Ner trust to friendship—but another hand—

S I W A R D. (*musing.*)

Ha! that alarms me—then it must be so;
And yet how far—

M O R C A R.

You pause.

S I W A R D.

I am resolv'd.

M O R C A R.

On what?

S I W A R D.

To serve, to honour, to—obey you.
Edwin shall ne'er disturb thy peace again.

M O R C A R.

O glorious instance of exalted friendship!

My other self, my best, my dear-lov'd Siward—
Conscience! thou busy monitor, away
And leave me—Siward, when shall it be done?
To night, my Siward, shall it not?

SIWARD.

Or never.

MORCAR.

Let me but see the proud Matilda weep;
Let me but hear the music of her groans
And fate my soul with vengeance—For the rest
'Tis equal all. But tell me, Siward, say,
How shall I know the bloody moment? What,
Shall be the welcome signal?

SIWARD.

When thou hear'st

The solemn curfeu sound, conclude
The business done—Farewell. When I return
With tears of joy thou shalt my zeal commend,
And own that Siward was indeed thy friend.

The End of the Fourth Act.

K

A C T V.

S C E N E, A Gothic Hall.

MORCAR, HAROLD.

MORCAR.

TREASON and foul rebellion in my camp!
 But I was born to be for ever wretched,
 The sport of fortune. These base mutineers——

HAROLD.

Your presence on the battlements, my lord,
 Dispers'd 'em soon; they hang their heads in silence,
 And all is peace.

MORCAR, (*to himself.*)

It is not so within.

Wou'd it were done or——

HAROLD.

What, my Lord?

MORCAR.

No matter.

What urg'd my soldiers to rebel?

HAROLD.

'Tis thought

The gallant captive did by secret means
 Excite them to revolt.

MORCAR.

It must be so.

By heav'n thou mak'st me happy with the tidings:
 His head shall pay the forfeit.

HAROLD.

Whilst he lives

We are not safe.

MORCAR.

MORCAR.

No more we 'are, good Harold;
'Tis fit he perish, is it not? What say'st thou?

HAROLD.

Prudence demands his life to save your own.

MORCAR.

O! thou hast given such comfort to my soul—

HAROLD.

My Lord—

MORCAR.

Be watchful: Bring me early notice
Of ev'ry motion: Go. [Exit Harold.]

Or I must fall,

Or Edwin—Hence ye visionary fears;
Ye vain chimeras hence—It is no matter:
Conscience I heed thee not; 'tis self-defence,
Nature's first law, and I must stand acquitted.

The prudent Siward seem'd to hesitate,
As if he wish'd, but knew not how to shun
The office. He who cou'd behold my tortures,
With all that cold tranquility, wou'd ne'er
Have ventur'd to remove them. But I've trusted
The sword of vengeance to a safer hand.
What ho! Who waits?

Enter an OFFICER.

That soldier whom thou saw'st
In private conf'rence with me, is he gone
As I directed him?

OFFICER.

My Lord, even now
I saw him hast'ning tow'rd the tow'r,

MORCAR.

'Tis well.

When he returns conduct him to me—Stay;

If Siward comes this way, I'm not at leisure :
 I will not see him. (*Starts.*) Hark ! did'st thou not hear
 The solemn curfeu ?

OFFICER.

No, my Lord.

MORCAR.

Not hear it !

It shocks my soul with horror—Hark ! again !
 Hollow and dreadful ! Sure thy faculties
 Are all benumb'd.

OFFICER.

Indeed, I heard it not.

MORCAR

Away, and leave me to myself.

[*Exit Officer.*

Methought

I heard a voice cry—stop—it is thy brother :
 We lov'd each other well ; our early years
 Were spent in mutual happiness together :
 Matilda was not there—I do remember
 One day, in sportive mood, I rashly plung'd
 Into the rapid flood, which had well nigh
 O'erwhelm'd me ; when the brave, the gallant Edwin,
 Rush'd in and sav'd me—Shall I, in return,
 Destroy my kind preserver ? Horrid thought !
 Forbid it heav'n ! (*pauses.*) I am myself again.
 All pow'rful nature ! once more I am thine.
 He shall not die—Who's there—

Enter an OFFICER.

My Oswald ! fly,

Fly to the tow'r this moment, haste and save
 My brother—Some base ruffian—

OFFICER.

If, my Lord,
 You mean the noble pris'ner there, I fear

It

It is too late : This moment as I pass'd
The citadel, I saw a mangled corse
Drawn forth by Siward's order——

MORCAR.

Slave, thou ly'st.

Away this moment, bring me better news
On peril of thy life.

[Exit Officer.

Who knows but heav'n,
In gracious pity, still may interpose
And save me from the guilt ? It is not done ;
It *shall* not—*must* not be—All's quiet yet ;
I have not heard the signal.

(The bell tolls.

Hark ! he's dead :

My brother's dead—O ! cover me ye shades
Of everlasting night ! Hide, if ye can,
A murth'rer from himself. Ha ! see he comes :
His wounds are bleeding still ; his angry eyes
Glare full upon me. Speak—what wou'd'st thou have ?
Matilda shall be thine : He smiles and leaves me——

(he pauses and recovers himself.

'Twas but the error of my troubled soul.

O ! guilt, guilt, guilt !

(throws himself down.

Here will I lay me down,
And end my days in bitterness and anguish.

Enter SIWARD.

Who's there ? Ha ! Siward here.

(rises.)

Speak, murth'rer, speak,
Where is my brother ? Villain, thou hast snar'd
My soul ; my honour's stain'd, my fame destroy'd,
And my sweet peace of mind is lost for ever.

SIWARD.

Matilda will restore it.

MORCAR.

Never, never.

The price of blood ! No ; Cou'd Matilda bring

The

The vanquish'd world, in dow'ry with her charms,
 I wou'd not wed her. O! cou'd I recal
 One hasty moment, one rash, cruel act—
 But 'twas thy savage hand that—

SIWARD.

I receiv'd
 Your orders: 'Twas my duty to obey them.

MORCAR.

Where slept thy friendship then? Thou know'st despair
 And madness urg'd me to it—but for thee—
 Thy callous heart had never felt the pangs,
 The agonies of disappointed love;
 Thou did'st not know Matilda—Curs'd obedience!
 How often has thy insolence oppos'd
 Thy master and thy prince? how often dar'd
 To thwart my will, and execute thy own:
 But when I bade thee do a deed of horror,
 And shed a brother's blood—thou cou'd'st obey me.

SIWARD.

Away! this is the trick of self-delusion,
 The common cant of hypocrites, who rail
 At others guilt, to mitigate their own?
 I've been the mean, the servile instrument
 Of thy base vengeance; but thou had'st prepar'd
 Another, a low ruffian, to perform
 The bloody office; I detest thee for it,
 Despise, abhor thee.

MORCAR.

Thou wert once my friend.

SIWARD.

Henceforth I am thy foe—Thou hast destroy'd
 The best of brothers, and the best of men.

MORCAR.

Despis'd by Siward—then my cup of sorrow

Is

Is full, indeed—But this shall—

(Attempts to kill himself, Siward wrests the sword from him.)

Ha! disarm'd!

But coward guilt is weak as infancy;

It was not so before I murder'd Edwin.

SIWARD.

The murd'rer's punishment shou'd be to live,

And shall be thine; thou know'st not half thy guilt,

Nor half thy sorrows: I shall rend thy soul.

Prepare thee for another deeper wound;

And know that Edwin lov'd thee, in his hand,

Whilst mine was lifted up for his destruction,

I found this paper, 'tis the counterpart

Of one he had dispatch'd to William, read it

And tremble at thy complicated guilt.

MORCAR, *(taking the paper.)*

What's here? He pleads my pardon with the king,

Ascribes my frantic zeal, in Edgar's cause,

To ill-advis'd warmth, and recommends

His—murderer to mercy: Horrid thought!

I am the vilest, most abandon'd slave

That e'er disgrac'd humanity—O, Siward!

If thou hast yet, among the dying embers

Of our long friendship, one remaining spark

Of kind compassion for the wretched Morcar,

Lend me thy aid to shake off the sad load

Of hated life that presses sore upon me.

SIWARD.

Tho' thou'rt no longer worthy of my friendship,

Deaf to the cries of nature, and the voice

Of holy truth, that wou'd have council'd thee

To better deeds, yet hath my foolish heart

Some pity for thee—After crimes, like these,

There is but one way left—Say, wilt thou patient wait

Till I return?

MOR-

M A T I L D A.

M O R C A R.

I will.

S I W A R D.

Remember, Morcar,

You promis'd me—I have a draught within,
 Of wondrous pow'r, that in a moment lulls
 The tortur'd soul to sweet forgetfulness
 Of all its woes: I'll haste and bring it thee,
 'Twill give thee rest and peace. [Exit Siward]

M O R C A R.

I hope for ever.

But where's the lost Matilda? who shall comfort
 That dear unhappy maid, whom I have robb'd
 Of ev'ry bliss. O, save me from the fight,
 Ye pitying pow'rs!

Enter M A T I L D A.

She comes—distracted!

M A T I L D A.

O!

My Lord, permit—

M O R C A R.

Away—I know thee not.

M A T I L D A.

Not know me! 'tis the poor distress'd Matilda,
 Who comes to ask forgiveness for the rage
 Of frantic love; the madness of despair,
 That urg'd me to such wrath and bitterness
 Of keen reproach; but pardon—(*kneels*)

Gen'rous Morcar,

A woman's weakness: Speak and make me blest.
 Alas! he hears me not.

M O R C A R.

Matilda, rise;

I pray thee leave me—(*weeps*)

M A T I L D A.

M A T I L D A.

Gracious heav'n ! he weeps ;
 Propitious omen ! O, my Lord ! those tears
 Are the soft marks of sympathizing woe,
 And seem to say, I shall not plead in vain.

M O R C A R.

Ask what thou wilt, for know, so dear I hold
 Matilda's happiness, that, here I swear
 If all the kingdoms of the peopled earth
 Were mine to give, I'd lay them at her feet :
 But much I fear they wou'd not make her happy.

M A T I L D A.

Alas ! my Lord Matilda's happiness
 Is center'd all in one dear precious jewel ;
 'Tis in *thy* keeping—Edwin—

M O R C A R.

What of him ?

M A T I L D A.

Is innocent.

M O R C A R.

I know it.

M A T I L D A.

Just and good ;

He never meant to injure thee, indeed
 He did not.

M O R C A R.

I believe it, for his nature
 Was ever mild and gentle.

M A T I L D A.

Good, my Lord,

You mock me.

M O R C A R.

No, Matilda ; speak, go on,

L

And

And praise him : I cou'd talk to thee for ever
Of Edwin's virtues—

M A T I L D A.

Then thou wou'd'st not hurt
His precious life, thou wou'd'st not—

M O R C A R.

I wou'd give
A thousand worlds to save him.

M A T I L D A.

Wou'd'st thou? then
My pray'rs are heard, thou hast forgiv'n all,
And I am happy. Speak, is Edwin free?

M O R C A R.

From ev'ry care—wou'd I were half so blest!

M A T I L D A.

What mean you? Ha! thy eyes are fixt with horror,
Thy looks are wild. What hast thou done? O! speak.

M O R C A R.

Matilda, if thou com'st for Edwin's life,
It is too late—for Edwin is no more.

M A T I L D A.

And is my Edwin slain?

M O R C A R.

Aye: Basely murder'd.
O! 'twas the vilest, most unnat'ral deed
That ever—

M A T I L D A.

Blasted be the cruel hand
That dealt the blow! O, may his guilty heart
Ne'er taste of balmy peace, or sweet repose!

M O R C A R.

But ever, by the vulture conscience, torn;
Bleed inward, still unpity'd, till he seek
For refuge in the grave.

MATILDA.

M A T I L D A.

Nor find it there.

M O R C A R.

'Tis well : Thy curses are accomplish'd all ;
 I feel 'em here within—for know—'twas I.
 I gave the fatal order, and my friend,
 My Siward, has too faithfully perform'd it.

M A T I L D A.

Siward ! impossible ! There dwells not then
 In human breast, or truth or virtue—O !
 Unnat'ral brother !—but I will be calm.

M O R C A R.

Alas ! thy fate is happiness to mine ;
 For thou art innocent.

M A T I L D A.

And soon, I hope
 To be rewarded for it. O ! my Edwin,
 Matilda soon shall follow thee—thou think'st
 I am unarm'd, deserted ; doom'd like thee
 To hated life ; but know, I have a friend,
 A bosom-friend, and prompt, as thine, to enter
 On any bloody service I command. (*Draws a dagger.*)

M O R C A R.

Command it then for justice, for revenge,
 Behold ! my bosom rises to the blow ;
 Strike here, and end a wretched murd'rer—

M A T I L D A.

No ;
 That were a mercy thou hast not deserv'd ;
 I shall not seek revenge in Morcar's death,
 In mine thou shalt be wretched—

(*Attempts to stab herself ; Morcar lays hold of the dagger.*)

L 2

M O R C A R.

M O R C A R.

Stop, Matilda—
 Stop thy rash hand, the weight of Edwin's blood
 Sits heavy on my heart. O! do not pierce it
 With added guilt.

M A T I L D A.

No more, I must be gone
 To meet my Edwin, who already chides
 My ling'ring steps, and beckons me away

M O R C A R.

Yet hear me! O! if penitence and pray'r,
 If deep contrition, sorrow and remorse
 Cou'd bring him back to thy desiring eyes,
 O! with what rapture wou'd I yield him now
 To thee, Matilda—bear me witness—Ha! (*starts*)
 'Tis he—Look up dear injur'd maid—he comes
 To claim my promise.

M A T I L D A.

It is, it is my Edwin!
 (*Enter Siward and Edwin: Edwin runs and
 embraces Matilda.*)

M O R C A R.

O unexpected bliss! what gracious hand—

S I W A R D.

Behold the cordial draught I promis'd you!
 I knew thy noble nature, when the storm
 Of passion had subsided, wou'd abhor
 A deed so impious—'Tis the only time
 That Siward ever did deceive his friend.
 Can'st thou forgive?

M O R C A R.

Forgive thee! O thou art
 My guardian angel, sent by gracious heav'n
 To save me from perdition. O, my brother!
 I blush to stand before thee—wilt thou take
 From these polluted hands one precious gift?

'Twill

'Twill make thee full amends for all thy wrongs.
Accept her, and be happy.

*(he joins the hands of Edwin and Matilda, then turning
to Siward)*

That vile slave
Whom I employ'd—

S I W A R D.

I guess'd his horrid purpose,
Watch'd ev'ry step, and as the villain aim'd
His ponyard at the guiltless Edwin's breast,
Turn'd sudden round, and plung'd it in his own,
The bloody corse was dragg'd—

M O R C A R.

I know the rest.
O, Siward! from what weight of endless woe
Hath thy blest hand preserv'd me!

E D W I N.

O, my Matilda! how shall we repay
Our noble benefactor? Much I owe
To gallant Siward, but to Morcar more:
Tou gav'st me life, but my kind, gen'rous brother
Enhanc'd the gift, and bless'd me with Matilda.

M A T I L D A, *(to Morcar.)*

Words are too poor to thank thee as I ought;
Accept this tribute of a grateful heart,
These tears of joy; and, O! may ev'ry curse
My frantic grief for Edwin pour'd upon thee,
Be chang'd to dearest blessings on thy head!

M O R C A R.

Alas! thy blessings cannot reach me. Guilt
May plead for pardon, but can never boast
A claim to happiness: I only ask

A late

A late forgiveness. If a life of sorrow,
And deep remorse, can wash my crimes away,
Let 'em be bury'd with me in oblivion,
And do not curse the memory of—Morcar.

(turning to Edwin.)

O, Edwin! say, can'st thou forgive the crime
Of frantic love, of madness and despair?

EDWIN.

As in my latest hour from heav'n I hope
Its kind indulgence for my errors past,
Ev'n so, my brother, from my soul I pardon
And pity thee.

MORCAR.

Then I shall die in peace.

EDWIN.

Talk not of death, my brother, thou must live
To see our happiness complete, to hear
My sweet Matilda pour forth all her heart
In rap'rous thanks to thee, and to thy friend;
And grateful Edwin blest thee for thy bounties.

MORCAR.

It must not be: I know too much already,
Of Morcar's weakness, and Matilda's pow'r
They are not to be trusted. No, my Edwin,
Morcar shall never interrupt thy joys.
Far from thy fight and from the haunts of men,
In some deep distant solitude retir'd,
To pious sorrow will I dedicate
My short remains of wretched life, and strive
To make my peace with heav'n and wrong'd Matilda.

And if perchance in after-times some bard,
Struck with the native horrors of my tale,
Shou'd bid th' historic muse record it—let him

By



By *my* example teach a future age,
The dire effects of loose, unbridled rage;
Teach thoughtless men their passions to controul,
And curb the fallies of th'impetuous soul,
Left they experience worse than Morcar's woe,
Nor find a Siward—to prevent the blow.

N E F I N I S.

PREPARING FOR THE PRESS,



COMPLETE TRANSLATION

OF THE

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From the G R E E K.

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